

BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS PRESERVATION STUDY ACT

NOVEMBER 12, 1991.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. JOHNSTON, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 1184]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the bill (S. 1184), to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the nature and extent of the salt loss occurring at Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, and how best to preserve the resources threatened by such salt loss, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with amendments and recommends that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The amendments are as follows:

1. On page 1, line 4, strike "Flat" and insert in lieu thereof, "Flats".
2. On page 2, lines 10 and 11, strike "of the enactment of this Act," and insert in lieu thereof, "funds are made available,".
3. On page 2, line 11, after the word "Interior", insert "(hereinafter 'the Secretary')".
4. On page 2, line 17 after the word "to", insert, "recommend that the Congress".
5. On page 2, lines 20 through 22, strike "a report to the Congress concerning such study, together with recommendations, if any, of the Secretary.", and insert in lieu thereof, "a report concerning the study, together with any recommendations, to the Congress."

PURPOSE OF THE MEASURE

The purpose of S. 1184, as ordered reported, is to direct a study to determine the nature and extent of the salt loss occurring at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, and how best to preserve the resources threatened by the salt loss.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

The Bonneville Salt Flats lie 90 miles west of Salt Lake City on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands. The asphalt-smooth flats were formed 16,000 years ago from the remnants of an ancient lake bed. Valuable as a unique environmental resource, the flats are valuable as an economic resource as well: race car events there generate almost \$3 million annually.

First surveyed in 1926, the area has shrunk from approximately 96,000 acres to 25,000 acres. Geologists estimate that the flats are disappearing at the rate of about 1 percent a year. In recent years, cracks and holes have appeared around the edges of the thinning flats.

S. 1184 authorizes a 2-year study to determine why the Salt Flats crust is shrinking.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 1184 was introduced by Senators Garn and Hatch on May 24, 1991. The Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests held a hearing on this measure on October 1, 1991.

At the business meeting on October 30, 1991, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered S. 1184, as amended, favorably reported.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND TABULATION OF VOTES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on October 30, 1991, by a unanimous vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass S. 1184, if amended as described herein.

The roll call vote on reporting the measure was 20 yeas, 0 nays, as follows:

YEAS

Mr. Johnston
 Mr. Bumpers
 Mr. Ford*
 Mr. Bradley*
 Mr. Bingaman
 Mr. Wirth
 Mr. Conrad
 Mr. Akaka*
 Mr. Fowler*
 Mr. Shelby*
 Mr. Wellstone*
 Mr. Wallop
 Mr. Hatfield
 Mr. Domenici
 Mr. Murkowski
 Mr. Nickles*
 Mr. Burns
 Mr. Craig
 Mr. Seymour*
 Mr. Garn

NAYS

* Indicates voted by proxy.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

During the consideration of S. 1184, the Committee adopted several technical and clarifying amendments.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 entitles the Act the "Bonneville Salt Flats Preservation Study Act."

Section 2 sets forth Congressional findings that the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah are a unique natural national treasure, that an unexplained salt loss from the salt flat crust is occurring, and that the salt loss is causing irreparable damage to the flats.

Section 3 provides that, not later than 2 years after the date funds are made available, the Secretary of the Interior shall conduct a study to determine the nature and extent of the salt loss from the Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, and how best to preserve the resources. In conducting the study, the Secretary shall consider whether to recommend that the Congress designate the Salt Flats as a national recreation or conservation area. Within 90 days after completion of the study, the Secretary shall submit a report and recommendations to Congress.

Section 4 authorizes to be appropriated \$1.5 million for fiscal years 1992 and 1993 to carry out the study.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following estimate of the cost of this measure has been provided by the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, November 5, 1991.

HON. J. BENNETT JOHNSTON,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the attached cost estimate for S. 1184, the Bonneville Salt Flat Preservation Study Act. Enactment of S. 1184 would not affect direct spending or receipts. Therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply to the bill.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them.

Sincerely,

ROBERT D. REISCHAUER,
Director.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

1. Bill number: S. 1184.
2. Bill title: The Bonneville Salt Flat Preservation Study Act.
Bill status: As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on October 30, 1991.
4. Bill purpose: S. 1184 would direct the Department of the Interior (DOI), within two years after funds are made available for these purposes, to study the nature and extent of salt loss from the

Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. DOI findings and recommendations would have to be submitted to the Congress within 90 days of the study's completion. The bill would authorize appropriations totaling \$1.5 million for fiscal years 1992 and 1993 to carry out the study.

5. Estimated cost to the Federal Government:

[By fiscal year, in millions of dollars]

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Specified authorization level.....	1.5	—	—	—	—
Estimated outlays.....	1.1	0.4	—	—	—

The costs of this bill fall within budget function 300.

Basis of estimate: CBO assumes that this bill would be enacted early in fiscal year 1992 and that the amounts authorized would be appropriated early in that year. Outlays were estimated based on information from the Bureau of Land Management.

6. Pay-as-you-go considerations: The Budget Enforcement Act of 1990 sets up pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts through 1995. CBO estimates that enactment of S. 1184 would not affect direct spending or receipts. Therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply to the bill.

7. Estimated cost to State and local governments: None.

8. Estimate comparison: None.

9. Previous CBO estimate: None.

10. Estimate prepared by: Theresa Gullo.

11. Estimate approved by: C.G. Nuckols, James L. Blum, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

In compliance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out S. 1184. The bill is not a regulatory measure in the sense of imposing Government-established standards or significant economic responsibilities on private individuals and businesses.

No personal information would be collected in administering the program. Therefore, there would be no impact on personal privacy.

Little, if any, additional paperwork would result from the enactment of S. 1184, as ordered reported.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

On September 13, 1991, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources requested legislative reports from the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget setting forth Executive agency recommendations on S. 1184. These reports had not been received at the time the report on S. 1184 was filed. When the reports become available, the Chairman will request that they be printed in the Congressional Record for the advice of the Senate. The testimony provided by the Bureau of Land Management at the Subcommittee hearing follows:

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL J. PENFOLD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
LAND AND RENEWABLE RESOURCES, BUREAU OF LAND MAN-
AGEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today to discuss S. 1184, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the nature and extent of the salt loss occurring at Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, and how best to preserve the resources threatened by such salt loss. A section-by-section analysis of the bill is attached to this statement.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) supports the study called for by S. 1184.

The Bonneville Salt Flats, a BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern, is a unique natural feature, long treasured domestically and internationally. Salt crust surveys conducted there in 1960, 1974, and 1988 indicate that there is a long-term salt loss of approximately 1 percent per year.

Potential causes of the salt loss have been identified and include impacts from potash mining in the area (operations are on Federal, State and private lands), construction of an Interstate Highway segment, construction of a railroad line, and climatological factors.

The Bonneville Salt Flats Coalition, a multiple-use support group consisting of State and local government, racing, mining, commercial film, and academic interests, was formed to advise the BLM on future management direction and strategies to ensure preservation of the Salt Flats.

The BLM funded a \$380,000 research and development project in Fiscal Year (FY) 1990 through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to review the salt loss at the Bonneville Salt Flat. It is important that this unique resource be preserved. Without the study, the mechanisms of salt loss and associated mitigation will not be known, resulting in the potential loss of this unique geological and recreational resource.

Enactment of S. 1184 would have no known impact under the pay-as-you-go provisions of the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990. The Department of the Interior would accomplish the study within available discretionary funding.

This concludes my prepared statement. I will be pleased to answer your questions.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Sec. 1. Short title.

This Act would be cited as the "Bonneville Salt Flat Preservation Study Act."

Sec. 2. Findings.

Under the provisions of Section 2 of this Act, the Congress would find that (1) the Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, is a unique natural national treasure; (2) an unexplained salt loss is occurring at Bonneville Salt Flat; and (3) this salt loss is causing irreparable damage to Bonneville Salt Flats, which is placing at risk numerous public resources, including scenic, historic, economic, and recreational resources.

Sec. 3. Study.

Section 3 of S. 1184 would provide that, no later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall conduct a study to determine the nature and extent of the salt loss from the subject salt flat crust and how best to preserve the resources threatened by such salt loss. In conducting the study, the Secretary would be required to consider whether to designate the Bonneville Salt Flat as a national recreation area or a national conservation area. Within ninety days after the completion of the study, the Secretary would be further required to submit a report to the Congress concerning such study, together with recommendations, if any, of the Secretary.

Sec. 4. Authorization of appropriations.

Section 4 would authorize to be appropriated \$1,500,000 for fiscal years 1992 and 1993 to carry out this Act.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee notes that no changes in existing law are made by the bill S. 1184, as ordered reported.